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ABSTRACT

The average family spends hundreds of dollars a year on personal care products. If not treated with care and common sense, these products may be harmful or even deadly. This booklet is designed to increase awareness of the entire range of such products. The proper use of cosmetics, especially eye make-up which might cause eye infections, is illustrated. Caution in the use of diet plans and schemes is urged. Emphasis is placed on proper use and storage of over-the-counter drugs. One of the greatest dangers in the home results from the improper use of electrical grooming appliances such as hair dryers and curling irons because these products are often used in the bathroom. Guidelines for the proper use of these appliances are given. (SM)

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Saskatchewan
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IV. Personal Health & Safety: Do You Know What You're Using?

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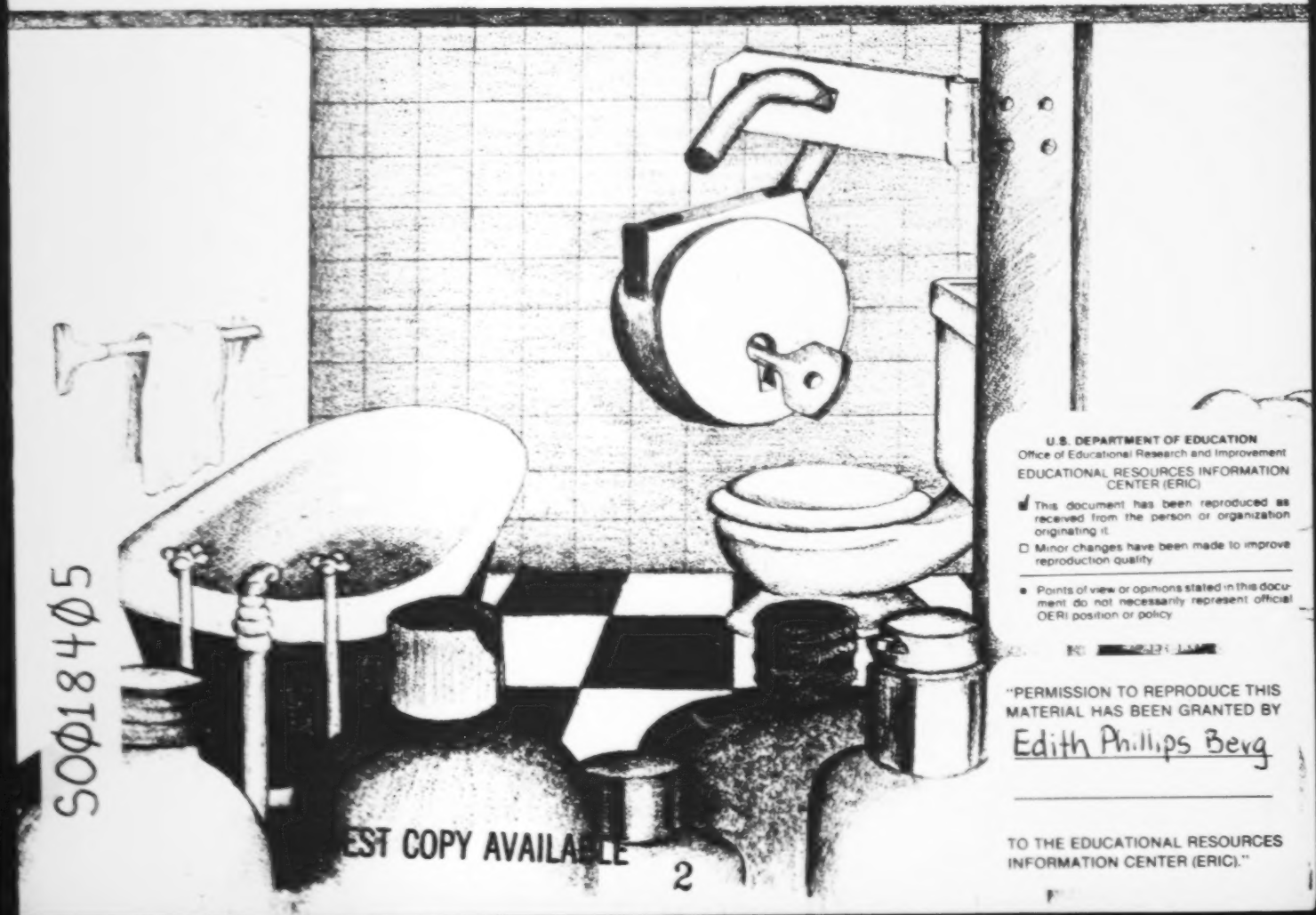

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The "Squeaky Clean" Phenomenon

The average Canadian family spends hundreds of dollars a year on personal care products. Our bathroom cupboards and cabinets are cluttered with a wide range of products we use daily to keep ourselves clean, fresh-smelling, free of minor upsets and ailments, well-groomed, curled, coiffured, and attractive.

Supermarkets devote entire aisles to personal care products. Drugstores deal almost exclusively with personal care items. Commercial messages and advertisements urging us to try product A or B or promising instant relief from irregularity or transformation into svelte, glamourous models of perfection bombard us from the pages of magazines or the television screen. True happiness, success, even health, we are led to believe, will be ours if only we buy, buy, buy!

Many of us take the statements made by manufacturers of personal care products for granted, assuming that the products are everything they claim to be — including safe and free of hazards. And too often we don't stop to read the instructions, follow directions, or check to see if there is something we should be aware of before we use the product.

All personal care products should be treated with care and common sense, whether it is something as simple as shampoo, or whether the product is an over-the-counter medication. Many consumer products, if abused or misused, are potentially dangerous — even deadly!

Why not follow the Aware Consumer's Safety Checklist before buying or using any personal care products?

The Aware Consumer's Safety Checklist

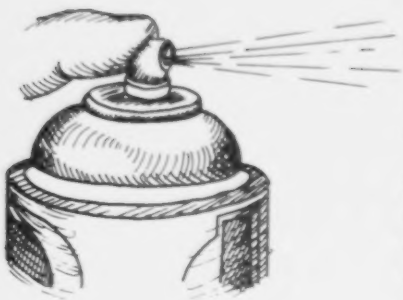
Before purchasing or using any personal care products, look before you leap. Stop and consider these steps and then choose according to your needs. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

PREPURCHASE DECISION MAKING	Gather information about the product to make sure it will serve your purpose. Make sure the product does what it claims to. **Beware of misleasing advertising or inflated claims by sellers.**
BUYING DECISION MAKING	Examine the product for damage or tampering. Ask the salesperson for information on the purpose of the product and its proper use. Think about the possible hazards through use or misuse of this product. **Keep your bill in case of future problems.**
USING	Check the label for hazard symbols and warnings. Read the first-aid information on how to handle accidents if they occur. Follow instructions for use carefully. **If the product involves an unavoidable risk, try to minimize this risk.** **Do not use the product if allergies develop.**
STORING	Store the product in its original container, or in a proper container clearly marked with hazard symbols. Store the product in a safe location, remembering to keep it away from animals and curious children. Do not keep cosmetic or drug preparations beyond their shelf-life.
DISPOSING	Dispose of aerosol cans in the garbage. Don't burn, puncture or compress the cans. Flush unused medications down the toilet.

Cosmetics

You don't use them, did you say?

From the first time our tender little bottoms are powdered we begin to use cosmetics. Anything applied to the body to enhance or clean it is considered a cosmetic, except soap, perhaps. Shampoos, toothpaste, deodorants and anti-perspirants are considered as cosmetics just as much as face creams, mascara and scents.



Aerosol Sprays — Take care with aerosol products. Most injuries occur when the eye is burned or injured when the product is accidentally sprayed towards the face. This can cause temporary loss of vision in addition to discomfort.

Shampoos contain ingredients that can produce eye and skin irritations and can be poisonous to children who are attracted by the fragrant, colourful contents. If they cause any irritation, stop using them. Rinse shampoos from your hair thoroughly.

Medicated shampoos, such as dandruff shampoo, should be treated with special caution. The anti-dandruff chemical can be very toxic and even small amounts may be fatal if accidentally ingested.

No-sting shampoos sometimes contain chemical ingredients that anesthetize the eyeball. While this in itself is not dangerous, it can cause people to overlook other serious irritations or injuries to the eye since these products can numb the eye for up to seven hours.

Deodorants and antiperspirants — Antiperspirant products use aluminum salts which retard the production and flow of sweat. Deodorants don't interfere with the production of sweat, but rely instead on the bactericide that prevents the formation of odor-causing bacteria. The most common adverse reaction to these products is skin irritation, which if severe enough, could require medical attention. If a product causes skin irritation, stop using it.

Genital deodorants can cause skin irritation and can be transferred to sensitive internal membranes, causing painful irritations and side effects that persist for months, including urinary tract infections, allergic reactions, itching, burning and swelling.

Hair colouring products and dyes are suspected of containing chemicals that cause cancer in laboratory animals. As well, skin irritation and sensitization and gastrointestinal and neurological symptoms have been associated with these products.

Always read instructions thoroughly and follow them to the letter. Do not leave the product on the head any longer than necessary. The scalp should be rinsed thoroughly with water after use. Always do a patch test before using a chemical product on the scalp, whether it's a colouring product or a perm. Request the same test at your hair salon, too. It is possible to develop a reaction to something you've used without incident after many years.

Never use hair dyes to colour eyebrows or eyelashes — keep the product well away from eyes, nose and mouth.

Eye make-up products include mascara, eyeliner, eye cream and eye shadow. Hygiene is especially important with the use of eye cosmetics. Even the smallest amount of bacteria can infect the entire container. Be careful when you're applying eye products — if a brush slips and scratches the eye, it's just like a needle innoculating you. If the product has bacteria, you could have trouble.

Skin moisturizers and creams are used by millions of people every day and night. Fragrances and preservatives used in the makeup are the most common source of irritation in these products. Ask the clerk whether a product contains fragrance ingredients. (In Canada, cosmetics manufacturers don't have to declare their ingredients on the label because these are considered trade secrets). Purchase a sample first to see how you will react to a product.

Wrinkle removers often make use of estrogen, which when applied to the skin can be absorbed. This is of medical concern because some studies have linked estrogen with causing cancer. Wrinkle removers also manipulate the skin in a controlled manner and can potentially lead to an increase in the skin's aging.

Nail Hardeners often contain formaldehyde as a preservative. Because this chemical is corrosive, toxic and allergenic, some people may develop severe allergic reactions to it.

Depilatories are creams, lotions or sprays that chemically dissolve the hair at the skin's surface. Depilatories can be used on all parts of the body; however, care must be taken to avoid the nose and eyes. Always apply a test sample first before using. Be sure to measure the time accurately and wash the cream off completely. Never use a depilatory on irritated or broken skin, or right before or after using an antiperspirant.

Hair bleach can camouflage unwanted hair. Do a patch test first and avoid working on troubled skin.

Hair waxing products remove unwanted hair by adhering to the hairs and being stripped away from the body, taking the hair with the wax. Waxing can be done at home or professionally. Follow the instructions carefully to avoid accidental burns or discomfort. A disadvantage of waxing is that it can be painful as the strips of wax are stripped off the body, much as a bandage might be. Some hairs may also become ingrown below the surface of the skin and cause inflammation.

Electrolysis involves the insertion of a fine wire or needle into the hair follicle, the release of an electrical current that dissolves or destroys the hair-producing follicle, and removal of the wire and retraction of the hair with tweezers. This process leaves a stinging sensation that lasts for at least half an hour, and if improperly done, can cause scarring. Although home electrolysis kits are available, they are extremely difficult to use.

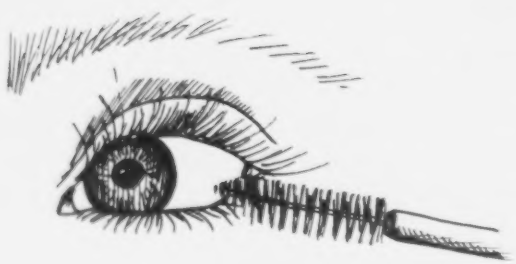
Cosmetic Safety Tips

Don't store cosmetics for more than a year — age can change a product. Keep cosmetics containers closed when not in use to prevent contamination or decomposition.

If an adverse reaction to a product occurs, discontinue the use of the product and see your doctor if the condition doesn't clear up in a reasonable period of time.

Report all adverse reactions from a cosmetic to the manufacturer or distributor and to the Cosmetic Division, Bureau of Non-Prescription Drugs, Health Protection Branch, Department of National Health and Welfare, Vanier, Ontario, K1A 1B8. Report any cosmetic that appears to have been tampered with, too.

Price is no assurance or guideline to performance. Despite wide fluctuations in price, some products may be nearly identical.



Diet Plans and Meals

In our society today, thinness is equated with perfection. Hundreds and thousands of people want to get out of bodies that are just a little bit too round for social taste. As well, many people are willing to spend large amounts of money for schemes that promise next-to-instant thinness!

Diet plans and schemes that promise quick weight loss are not only an unhealthy way to lose weight, they can be downright dangerous!

One extreme form of diet — a liquid protein diet containing less than 400 calories a day, was linked to 17 deaths in the U.S. in 1977 and 1978. Scientists who studied the deaths found that the dieters had died of irregular heart rhythms and cardiac arrest.

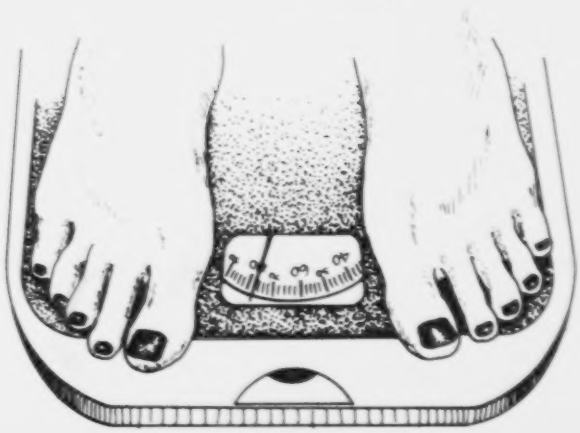
Consumers should be aware that any diet of fewer than 800 calories a day is potentially dangerous and should be undertaken only under medical supervision.

Studies show that people who lose weight rapidly tend to regain the lost weight within months. Some diet schemes make use of diuretics, and frequently weight loss is a result of water loss rather than lost fat cells.

Unfortunately, there is no quick and easy way to lose weight. The most effective way is to examine your weight problem with a doctor's help and to change your eating habits. Initiate a program of moderate exercise and eat a balanced diet consisting of smaller amounts of ordinary food. Your doctor, a dietician or a nutritionist should advise you before you begin this safe diet.

Over-the-counter diet aids work by suppressing the appetite. Canadian products, for the most part, contain benzocaine, vitamins and bulk producing fibre such as methylcellulose. Benzocaine, a local anesthetic, works by numbing the taste buds. The effectiveness of bulk agents has not been proven. When using them one has to be careful to take enough fluid to prevent possible intestinal obstruction. Never use diet aids if you are pregnant, or suffer from high blood pressure, depression, diabetes or thyroid disease.

Body wraps and rubber sweat suits have no effect on fat deposits. Rapid and excessive fluid loss can bring on severe dehydration and upset the balance of important chemicals in the body, and this could cause personal injury from circulatory constriction or cardiac incident while exercising.



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Over-the-Counter Drugs (OTC Drugs) and First Aid Products

Canadians today who are suffering from a cold, nasal drip, upset stomach, irregularity or a myriad of ailments, are repeatedly reminded by advertisements that they need only visit their neighbourhood pharmacy and find the relief they need in a bottle or package. Self-medication is a fact of life! Drug store shelves are lined with every conceivable product that claims to relieve practically anything from acne to obesity. Very often, consumers have little to direct them in their purchases of over-the-counter medication apart from the manufacturer's advertising or directions and instructions that appear on the package.

A good rule of thumb is to speak to your **doctor** before beginning any self-medication and talk to the **pharmacist** on duty at the drug store. These people can advise you about possible side effects, alert you to any warnings about the product's use or misuse, tell you not to take a certain medication in combination with other medications, remind you about safe dosages, and tell you whether or not the medication is safe or suitable for children, pregnant women, or people suffering from conditions such as diabetes, high or low blood pressure, heart disease, hypertension, kidney ailments or other chronic conditions.

Whenever Using OTC Drugs, **Remember — Always Play It Safe**

1. **Consult with your doctor and pharmacist**.
2. **Read the label and follow directions carefully**.
3. **Avoid frequent use** of any over-the-counter drug, and **see your doctor** if symptoms persist.
4. **Keep all medicines safely out of the reach of children**.

While it would be next to impossible to provide a complete rundown on the thousands of products available today, here is some information about some of the most commonly used over-the-counter preparations.

Vitamins

Most of us take vitamins unnecessarily. If you follow the Canada Food Guide, you should receive all the vitamins and minerals you need for normal growth and maintenance in your diet. Except in special circumstances such as pregnancy, infancy, old age, certain genetic or disease conditions and vegetarianism, you don't need to spend money on vitamins. Excess vitamins are either excreted or in some cases can actually accumulate in body tissues and result in a toxic overdose.

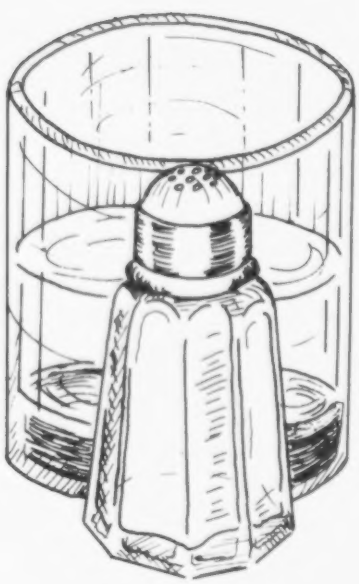
Cough Medications

There are two types of cough medications — cough suppressants, and cough expectorants. Neither type is as effective as many advertisements claim.

Some cough preparations contain codeine. Overdoses of codeine can cause an inability to breath spontaneously — if you suffer from lung disease, avoid any drugs containing codeine. Codeine also commonly causes constipation, drowsiness and can be addictive if taken for a prolonged period of time.

Liquid cough medications often contain alcohol. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that can increase the drowsiness side effects of other ingredients in the medication. Some cough medicines contain more alcohol than table wine!

Read the ingredients carefully and be sure to follow any directions on the package or bottle. Use these products with moderation. If your cold is really serious, call your doctor. And get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluid!



Throat Medications

Medicated lozenges, antiseptic sprays and gargles are over-the-counter medications that promise relief for a sore throat. Since sore throats are caused by postnasal drip, dry air or bacterial infections, these medications do little to cure the cause but simply mask the symptom.

The best they can do is to provide temporary relief. A.S.A. or acetaminophen is a better pain killer, and gargling with warm salt water can be more helpful than gargling with a commercial medication.

These preparations also contain a high level of sugars. Read the label for ingredients and avoid these if you are a diabetic.

***WARNING; A.S.A. AND REYE'S SYNDROME**

A statistical link has been established between A.S.A. (Acetylsalicylic acid) and Reye's Syndrome — a mysterious, potentially fatal illness which strikes children usually following a viral illness such as influenza or chicken pox. In 1985 there were 9 known cases in Canada, 4 of which were fatal. Many unanswered questions remain about the A.S.A. link. Many medications contain A.S.A. so check labels very carefully — not all products containing A.S.A. carry the voluntary label warning about chicken pox and influenza.

Nasal Sprays and Decongestants

Inhalers and nose sprays are effective in quickly reducing nasal congestion, but be careful to avoid overuse. Read directions on overuse. This product can result in a worsening of the congestion, creating a vicious cycle where the more you use the spray, the more you need it. Discontinue using any nasal products that cause irritation.

Allergy Medications

Over-the-counter allergy medications can be useful in treating hay fever or allergic sinusitus. Antihistamines are also used to relieve swelling and itching sometimes caused by allergic reactions as well as easing of motion sickness. Products containing **phenylephrine** are decongestants, not antihistamines. Consult with your pharmacist to make the correct selection. Although there are some antihistamines which do not cause drowsiness, most allergy medications containing antihistamines are sedating. Avoid driving a car, operating appliances or machinery while taking them.

Do not use products containing caffeine, aspirin or acetaminophen — allergies do not require fever or pain medication and caffeine is ineffective in treating allergy symptoms. In fact, caffeine stimulates the heart and can compound the stimulation effect caused by a decongestant you may be taking at the same time as an antihistamine.

Laxatives

Any laxative can be habit-forming and should be used only occasionally. Side effects from chronic use include constipation, abdominal cramps, diarrhea and other complications.

Some laxative products contain high levels of salt and sodium. Read the ingredient list carefully and avoid these if you have any chronic kidney disease or are on a salt-restricted diet.

Remember, tension, pregnancy, a change in eating habits and certain medications can all cause constipation. If the condition continues, see your doctor. If your diet contains enough fibre such as bran, fruit and vegetables, you should not need to use laxatives.

Antacid Medications

Occasional indigestion is common, but if it persists, you need medical attention and should not be medicating yourself.

Frequent use of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) — the principal ingredient in many antacid products — can lead to the formation of kidney stones or contribute to recurrent urinary tract infections.

Other antacid products use calcium carbonate which can cause constipation and raise calcium levels in the blood to undesirable levels, causing possible kidney damage or stones.

Sleeping Aids

The use of sleeping aids — prescription or non-prescription — is not recommended. They can cause psychological or physical dependence, overdose and even death. They are particularly dangerous when used in combination with alcohol.

If your doctor does prescribe sleeping medication for you, carefully follow all instructions. Avoid all alcohol, and use medication for hay fever, allergies, colds, pain or seizure medications, tranquilizers or antidepressants under supervision of your doctor. Do not drive or use any machinery or equipment that requires you to be alert.

Side effects include a hangover, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, frequent urination, fatigue or double vision.

Instead of risking a dependence on these products to help you sleep, try going for a long walk before bedtime, retiring an hour earlier than usual, drinking a glass of warm milk before bedtime and keeping your bedroom cool, dark and quiet.

First Aid Products

There are a variety of ointments, antiseptics and creams available without a prescription to treat small cuts, abrasions and burns. Unfortunately, many of these medications may contain ingredients that actually aggravate the conditions.

Left alone, injured skin has shown itself to have remarkable recuperative powers. But when treated with the wrong chemical, injured skin may find this second assault too much to handle.

Antiseptics such as iodine, will in fact kill germs but its safety on the skin remains unproven.

If you feel you must use an antiseptic, choose isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol), but apply only on the skin around the wound — never on the wound.

Topical antibiotic ointments or creams are usually not necessary and may cause problems — there is no reliable way to predict how their drugs might interact with any microorganisms in a wound. Nor is their effectiveness proven. If a wound becomes red or swollen, call a doctor. The real value of any antibiotic applied topically is not in killing bacteria already in the wound, but rather to kill bacteria around the wound before they reach the wound itself.

Most minor cuts and scrapes can be handled without fuss. You can treat them by cleansing gently with soap and water and covering them with a bandage for protection. If a cut bleeds a little, that's good — it helps to flush out the wound. Never scrub a wound.

Some wounds do require medical attention:

— if the wound is deep, wide or ragged,
— if dirt, gravel or glass or other debris is embedded,
— deep wounds and puncture wounds if caused by dirty objects,
— animal bites that break the skin,
— wounds that become red or swollen or fail to heal within a week.

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Personal Electric Grooming Aids

Each year there are thousands of accidents involving hair dryers, electric curlers and combs, electric curling irons, razors and tooth brushes. The big safety risk of any of these electrical grooming devices is the risk of shock because people tend to use them in the bathroom.

Precautions:

- Make sure that all the appliances you use have a CSA stamp of approval.
- Never use electric grooming appliances where there is a risk of the product falling into water. Should it fall in, never attempt to retrieve it without first unplugging it. To do so means certain severe electrical shock — possibly even death.
- Be sure your hands are absolutely dry when you plug or unplug devices. Avoid contact with any wet surface when using them.
- Always unplug all appliances after use, even if they have a shut-off switch.
- Make sure that these products have a cut-off device to turn themselves off if they begin to overheat. There should be a thermostat to avoid the risk of overheating. Ensure that the air intake vent is always clear in a hair dryer.
- Make sure that the appliance can be held safely and easily without the risk of grasping the hot part accidentally.
- Be careful with high pressure water jets in electric dental irrigators. The lower pressure setting is gentler and safer for tender tissue.
- Remember, at their maximum temperature, curling irons are hotter than boiling water. That could result in painful burns should the hot barrel touch your scalp or face.
- Butane curlers contain inflammable gas under pressure. Keep them away from sources of heat and never take them apart, incinerate or puncture them.
- Make certain your hair dryer does not contain asbestos fibres. Some hair dryers manufactured before 1980 contained asbestos liners which released asbestos fibres into the air. To make sure your hair dryer was made after 1980, find your serial number and check it with the manufacturer.

13

Do-It-Yourself Medical Testing Devices

The last few years have seen a surge in the manufacture and sales of home medical testing equipment. People, on their own in their homes, are now testing eyesight, blood and bloodpressure, urine and stools as well as testing for infection, pregnancy, diabetes and other conditions. In some cases self-monitoring is essential (ie. the blood glucose test for diabetics). The hazard lies in confusing "self-testing" with "self-diagnosis" and making medical decisions without professional medical guidance.

The Federal watchdog for these devices is the Bureau of Medical Devices, Health and Welfare Canada, with regulations under the **Food and Drug Act**. This agency also receives reports from the public regarding faulty or improperly used medical devices.

These regulations set out how devices are to be tested, what standards must be met, the expiration date of a device, directions for use of the device, information as to its sterility, cautions or warnings and potential hazards, conditions of sale, who is qualified to install or use these, as well as recall or correction procedures to make sure that any faulty devices can be tracked or identified.

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) tries to keep abreast of the changing technology in medical devices and undertakes on-going standards development and pre-market testing.

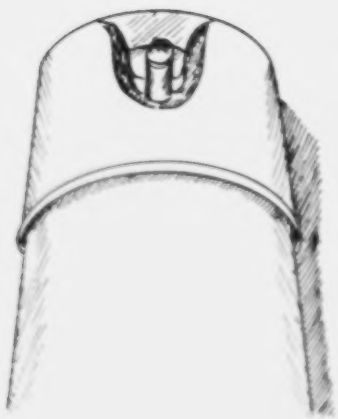
For instance, a few years ago some defective models of resuscitators became available on the market. These manually operated devices were meant to take the place of mouth to mouth resuscitation. The Bureau of Medical Devices ordered the machines off the market because they didn't deliver enough air to the patient. Now a voluntary resuscitator standard from CSA will offer consumers the assurance that certain resuscitators are safe and effective. Look for the CSA label to indicate compliance.

Precautions:

- Learn what the home medical device is intended to do and what its limitations are.
- Study the package insert — fully understand each step and follow directions exactly.
- If an instruction is not clear, don't guess. Consult a health professional.
- Keep test kits that contain chemicals out of reach of children. Note expiry dates. Promptly discard test materials as directed.

Case Studies

A. Flammable Hair Spray



A woman, putting the finishing touches to her hair, liberally sprayed it with hair spray from a pressurized can and seconds later lit up a cigarette. She suffered serious burns to her arms, face and scalp as the fumes from the hair spray, still in the air, ignited and exploded.

Questions for Discussion

a. Was this hazard inherent in the product or was it caused by misuse or abuse of the product?

b. What were the responsibilities of the consumer in this situation?

c. What is the responsibility of the manufacturer or retailer in this situation?

d. Does a government agency have any responsibility in this situation?

e. How could this problem be prevented in the future?

Some Possible Answers

a. The problem was created by the consumer who did not read the product labels or observe the warnings not to use the product in the presence of an open flame or spark and to avoid smoking during use and until hair is thoroughly dry. Had the consumer paid attention to the warnings, she would not have been injured by the explosion of gases.

b. The consumer's responsibility is to read the labels carefully and follow their instructions and cautions.

c. Warnings were given on the product. Perhaps the warnings could have been made clearer or printed in larger type to draw attention to the hazards of using flammable hair spray or any pressurized product.

d. Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada requires all manufacturers to use hazard symbols on their products if applicable. As well, manufacturers are required to include warnings and instructions for proper use on the product. In this case, the manufacturer had complied with the regulations for labelling of hazardous products and was not at fault.

e. More consumer education could alert consumers to dangers in using ordinary personal care products carelessly, without discretion, or without regard to printed warnings and directions.

B. Sunlamp

A man was preparing for his first winter vacation in the sun. A friend suggested he take several sessions at a local tanning salon to give himself a tanning base before his holiday so that he would be able to tolerate longer periods in the tropical sun.

The man made a few inquiries at tanning salons but decided he would be further ahead to purchase his own sun lamp. Impatient to get started on a tan, he sat under his sunlamp for half an hour and caused serious burns to skin on most of his body requiring medical treatment and causing him to miss his holiday departure.

Questions for Discussion

a. Was this hazard inherent in the product, or was it caused by misuse or abuse of the product?

b. What were the responsibilities of the consumer in this situation?

c. What is the responsibility of the manufacturer or retailer in this situation?

d. Does a government agency have any responsibility in this situation?

e. How could this problem be prevented in the future?

Some Possible Answers

a. The problem was created by the consumer who didn't read the instructions that came with the sunlamp to limit use of the lamp on the first day and increase it slowly each additional day. The instructions also included warnings to use the protective eyewear that was provided with the sunlamp. Had the consumer read these instructions and paid attention to the warnings, he would not have suffered extensive burns to his skin.

b. The consumer's responsibility was to read all the instructions that came with the sunlamp.

c. Any electrical product sold in Canada must carry the CSA symbol that certifies that it has passed inspection and abides by minimum safety and health standards established in accordance with the Electrical Code of Canada. The sunlamp carried the CSA symbol and also complied with Health and Welfare Canada regulations to provide information about the safe use of the sunlamp along with any warnings about abuse of the product. Sunlamps should have timers which switch off the lamp after a preset time.

d. Health and Welfare Canada believes that avid "sun worshippers" should be warned about overexposure to the ultraviolet radiation given by sunlamps. It introduced regulations limiting the wavelength range of tanning lamps and insisting that commercial tanning salons better inform consumers about the safe use of commercial tanning facilities. Current regulations require warnings about eye

hazards (prolonged gazing at most lamps will cause permanent damage to vision) and a radiation symbol to be posted clearly in every salon.

The Department has also issued warnings about skin sensitivity to tanners who are taking certain medications, including sulfonamides, diuretics, estrogen, some antibiotics and drugs to treat diabetes or high blood pressure.

e. Consumers could be better educated about the risks of using either at-home or commercial tanning booths and salons.

C. Shoes

On a cool day in the autumn, a woman broke a bone in her left foot stepping off a sidewalk. A year later she skidded walking to a table in her kitchen and sprained her right ankle. She blamed both falls on the shoes she was wearing — the thin disc of plastic at the bottom of the heels — the lift.

Questions for Discussion

a. Was this hazard inherent in the product, or was it caused by misuse or abuse of the product?

b. What were the responsibilities of the consumer in this situation?

c. What is the responsibility of the manufacturer or retailer in this situation?

d. Does a government agency have any responsibility in this situation?

e. How could this problem be prevented in the future?

Some Possible Answers

a. The hazard was inherent in the product. The heel lifts on women's shoes used to be made of rubber but most manufacturers have now switched to synthetics which are harder and more durable. However, the harder the material, the more slippery it is. Cheap plastic lifts turn rigid in cold weather.

b. The consumer will have to examine heels of shoes very closely especially the narrow heeled ones. Some women have started immediately replacing the lifts on the shoes they buy.

c. Manufacturers should put better lifts on women's shoes. There are bettter quality heel lifts made of polyurethane for durability, most with a small amount of rubber for resiliency. Retailers should try to support consumers with a choice of safer lifts.

d. Consumer and Corporate Affairs did investigate the problem a few years ago and concluded there was not enough data to justify placing the product under the **Hazardous Products Act.** Monitoring the situation may not be enough if more and more problems show up.

e. Consumers should contact Consumer and Corporate Affairs when they have safety problems with their shoe lifts to try to convince the Department to put the onus on shoe manufacturers to change the materials on the shoe heel tips.

Safety Aptitude Quizzes

A. Match the product with the hazard

On the left is the product. On the right is the hazard most closely associated with the product. Match them.

1. Hair spray
2. Nail polish remover
3. Hair dyes and rinses
4. Deodorants and anti-perspirants
5. Cold remedies
6. Sleeping pills

____ Drowsiness
____ Addictive
____ Flammable
____ Skin irritation
____ Harmful fumes
____ Allergic reaction

Answers:

1. Flammable
2. Harmful fumes
3. Allergic reaction
4. Skin irritation
5. Drowsiness
6. Addictive

B. Which of these products are considered to be cosmetics?

Mascara
Deodorant
Shampoo
Hair spray
Eye shadow
Lipstick
Moisturizers
Hair conditioners
Hair remover
Bubble bath

Answer: All of them. And you thought you didn't use cosmetics?

C. What personal care products should you discuss with your doctor before using?

Toothpaste
Laxatives
Dandruff shampoo
Antihistamines and allergy medications
Antiperspirant
Antacid
Mouthwash
Diet aids and meal replacements

Answers:

Discuss **every second product** listed with your doctor or pharmacist to find out if you really need to use it, if there are harmful effects because of your condition (pregnancy, on prior medication), or if it might be habit-forming. Laxatives, allergy medications, antacids and diet aids should be taken with caution.

D. Test Your P.S.Q. (Personal Safety Quotient)

Answer Yes or No

1. All my electrical grooming aid appliances such as blow dryers and curling irons have a CSA stamp that indicates that the appliance has been tested for safety of operation. _____
2. Whenever I buy or use a cosmetic or personal care product, I read the label and follow directions faithfully. _____
3. I clean out my medicine chest on a regular basis and discard old and left-over medicines. _____

4. I read label directions carefully whenever medicines are used and check medications for ingredient contents. _____
5. I place only one night's medication by the bedside to avoid overdosages. _____
6. I exercise my consumer responsibility by reporting any adverse reactions from a cosmetic to the manufacturer or distributor and to the Health Protection Branch, Health and Welfare Canada. _____
7. I always speak to my pharmacist about how to use prescription or non-prescription drugs and any possible side effects I might expect. _____
8. I dispose of left-overs from medicine cabinets safely and regularly — especially prescription drugs for a particular illness. _____
9. I avoid using hair spray near open flame or when smoking. _____
10. I always give myself a patch test before I use any hair colouring products. _____
11. I never use other people's personal grooming supplies. _____
12. I keep cosmetic containers closed when not in use, and out of reach of children who might want to explore. _____
13. I discard cosmetics that are more than a year old because age alters a product's properties and the cosmetic may no longer be satisfactory or safe. _____
14. When an adverse reaction occurs to some make-up or personal care product I've been using, I discontinue its use. If the problem persists, I see my doctor. _____
15. I dispose of empty aerosol pressurized containers by placing them in a covered garbage can and never burn them. _____
16. I never take aspirins or other pain killers or other over-the-counter medications in dosages that exceed the maximum amount on the label. If a little is good, more is not necessarily better! _____
17. I always consult my doctor before beginning a diet or exercise program, treating myself for allergies, or when taking an antacid regularly. _____
18. I don't take vitamins or dietary supplements unless my doctor advises me to. I make sure I get the nutrients I need by eating well balanced meals selected from the major food groups. _____
19. I keep products like shampoos, bubble baths, hair conditioner, and nail polish remover out of the reach of small children. _____

20. I avoid any kind of sleep medications and deal with sleeplessness by other means such as taking a long walk before bed. _____

21. I steer clear of quick weight-loss schemes and programs. _____

22. I realize that I buy liberal amounts of fantasy when I pay for expensive cosmetics. _____

Here's How You Scored

Total your "Yes" answers:

20 - 22: You should have written this chapter!
15 - 19: Congratulations! The insurance companies love you!
10 - 14: Good, but please be more careful.
6 - 9: Please don't invite us to your house.
1 - 5: Call the ambulance, alert your doctor. You are living dangerously!

Notes